

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Toshio Ansai

Toshio Ansai was born January 5, 1908 in Wailuku, Maui. He was educated at Wailuku Elementary School and St. Anthony Boys' School.

He worked various jobs for Wailuku Sugar Company from 1925 to 1971, including clerk, bookkeeper and manager at Waihe'e Dairy and Farm. From 1954 to 1971, he was the industrial relations and personnel director. During the war, Ansai served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Ansai entered politics in 1934, when he was elected as a Republican to the Maui County Board of Supervisors. He served until 1942, and again from 1960 to 1962. He was a territorial senator from 1948 to 1956, and a state senator from 1962 to 1970. In 1975, he returned to county politics as a member of the Maui County Council, and served until 1982.

In 1984 Mayor Hannibal Tavares appointed Ansai to the Maui County Planning Commission. He served until 1990.

Toshio Ansai fell ill and passed away before completing his interviews.

Tape No. 17-43-1-89

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Toshio Ansai (TA)

December 14, 1989

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

Joy Chong: The following is a interview with Toshio Ansai. It took place on December 14, 1989 at the Ansai residence in Maui. The interviewers were Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto. This is videotape number one.

MK: Videotape interview number one with Toshio Ansai, on December 14, 1989.

Okay, Senator Ansai, maybe we can start today's interview by having you tell us when and where you were born.

TA: I was born here in the town of Wailuku, in the year 1908. To be exact, January the 5th, which makes me eighty-two years in two weeks. Most of my life was (spent) here. I was reared in Wailuku and I (attended) [Wailuku] Elementary School. Most of my young, educational days were spent here. I grew up like other young boys (who grew) up in a community like ours. Wailuku was a small plantation town eighty years ago, and (our family) lived in a plantation camp, because my parents were employed by the [Wailuku Sugar] Company as field laborers.

But it was fun. We had to create our own recreational program, our games, our plays and everything, because there was no youth program (sponsored) by the government or any other organization. Everything was made by ourselves (in large and) small groups. (My) life(style was) like any other young boy eighty years ago (who lived in a plantation community).

MK: And your parents [Kumataro and Kesayo Ansai], they were immigrants from Japan. What part of Japan did they come from?

TA: I think in terms of province, they (came) from Fukushima-ken, (Japan). They were farmers, so naturally they came (to Hawai'i) as farmers. Like the farmers of those days, with very little educational background (and) very little training (in other occupations), they worked from sunup to sundown (in the cane fields), and took good care of their families. We (were) a very happy family. I am the second son; fourth in the family of nine children. A large family was a common thing in those days. You (seldom) heard of a family having only two or three (children). Today, (one) talks in terms of one or two. Two is considered (an average) family. In those days, the family of five or six was considered small. My life was (not) different (from) any other youngster of eighty years ago.

MK: And your father was employed by. . . .

TA: He came here as an immigrant laborer and (was) employed by the Wailuku Sugar Company (on Maui). It was the largest sugar company here in (the) Wailuku area. (There was) a much larger sugar company in Lahaina [the Pioneer Mill Company] and (one) in Pu'unēnē [the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company]; I think (the) Pu'unēnē sugar plantation was considered one of the largest sugar plantations in the world at that time. Subsequent to that, of course, (there were) larger sugar plantations in the Philippines and elsewhere, but Pu'unēnē was the largest sugar company (then). (Whenever) you talk in terms of the production of sugar, cane sugar, invariably, Pu'unēnē was mentioned.

MK: And what kind of work did your father do for Wailuku Sugar [Company]?

TA: Being a field laborer . . .

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, and what kind of work did your father do for Wailuku Sugar [Company]?

TA: He was a laborer in the fields. He (started) with that, and then later he was shifted to the factory [i.e., sugar mill]. He was a (big) man (physically) in those days. Seeing a Japanese person about 190 pounds and five [feet] seven [inches] was (considered) a large man. Most of the other (laborers) were barely over five feet and (weighed in the) 140s and 130s [pounds]. The (work) was (strenuous). He was shifted to (work in) the factory (where he) had to load the sugar bags on(to) the freight cars. Each one of those bags weighed 100 pounds. And they had to keep (at it) all day long for eight hours. This is the kind of (strenuous) work he did.

Later, he (was in) an industrial accident and had to limit his work(load) and (shorten his hours) of work, (which forced the older children in the family to do their share to support) the family. Every one of us had our chores to do. (My sisters worked as maids for families with children.) I helped the family raise livestock, so that we (could) bring (in) additional income. My mother started a tofu (shop). If you'll (recall) what a tofu (shop) in the old days was like: every bit of it was manual (work). I had to get up (at) five o'clock in the morning to help grind the soybeans (to) make it into paste form, and then go through the process and blocking (them) up into tofu (squares). This is the (type) of work we had to do to (add) additional income to (make up for) the loss that my dad (suffered)—because of his illness and accident. (This was my life) when I was (a) young (boy).

MK: And, you know, back in those days, were your parents very active in community affairs?

TA: Yes. My dad was. He took a very (active) leading part in the Japanese Hongwanji Mission, and in (the) Japanese-language school (in Wailuku). He was considered one of the pillars of both activities. He did his share, (although) the hours of work were long. The family (was) up at five o'clock in the morning, because we (had) to get to our place of work before six, and (returned home about) five o'clock in the afternoon. Of course, (we) had half an hour for breakfast and half an hour for lunch. It's not like today's work program where (one) starts after breakfast and then quits around four. There was no such thing as a forty-hour week (program). We worked from sunup to sundown for six days a week. Sunday was the only day of rest, (but) Sunday (was) the time that (we concentrated on chores) of the family, (such as)

have a little truck garden in the backyard, so (we could) raise most of the crops (to) sell. I (gathered) firewood and prepared for my mother's tofu processing plant. We kept ourselves (quite) busy.

There was (very little) time for us to go out to participate in any organized recreational program. There was no organized recreational program to begin with. We used to have our own [base]ball team, and swimming team, and hiking team; (games) like that. Life was (difficult). There was no such thing as (a privately-owned) automobile in those days. If we wanted to go down to the beach to spend the weekend as [Boy] Scouts, we (walked) to the beach, and walked all the way back, (carrying) the weekend supply on (our) backs. We made the most of it, (but) enjoyed every bit of it.

MK: And you mentioned that you were educated in Wailuku. What schools did you go to?

TA: Oh, I went to Wailuku Elementary School, which is about a block away from (home). And after (eighth grade) I (attended) the St. Anthony [Boys'] School, which (was a) commercial junior high school. I had to leave school immediately after that to help (our) family with (our financial) needs. I . . .

WN: I'm sorry.

TA: Go ahead.

WN: Were there other Japanese boys going to St. Anthony's at that time?

TA: Oh yes. Our graduating class (consisted of) seventeen boys—a small class, and about one-third of them were Japanese. St. Anthony [Boy's] School is a parochial school and was attended mostly by children who are Catholics, but there were many of us who were (non-Catholics and) didn't have any religion to speak of. I was not even a Buddhist, although my parents were. Religious training was not emphasized in our young days. We were busy doing other things that religion (was not) an important factor. (Our) parents in those days were busy trying to (support) the family, educate the family, (tend to the immediate) needs of the family, that they took very little time to try to teach religion to the youngsters. Today, of course, even the Buddhist organizations have such things as youth classes, and Sunday school, and (other activities related to their religion). The Catholic religion, (the church spent most) of the time (on) weekends and evenings to teach the younger people (their catechism,) to prepare them (for) the (Catholic) religion.

MK: I was wondering, since, you know, St. Anthony's is a parochial school and not a public school, how did you end up going to St. Anthony's?

TA: Well, immediately after I graduated from [Wailuku] Elementary School [eighth grade], I was only fourteen years old and I had to (get) a job. The manager of the Wailuku Sugar Company was kind enough and very understanding that I needed something to do to help (our) family, so (he) gave me a (part-time) job at the Wailuku Sugar [Company] office. My job was to take care of the harvesting records for the plantation. In those days, anyone who harvests a section of the field did it on a contract, and every bit of what he (did) had to be recorded and kept (a) record of, because he got paid accordingly. If your field is well kept and well cared for, naturally you're going to have a bigger yield than just to leave it idle. Depending on the

yield, your pay depended (on that.) So (cash laborer's) record had to be kept correctly so that (he was paid the) right amount (which was due him). This was my job. And I found that only (an) eighth-grade education (was) far from anyone's basic needs. The parochial school happened to be only half a block away from the place of my work, so I (asked) the principal (of the Catholic school) and he told me, sure, I can (enroll as a student.) Working and going to school at the same time was a difficult thing. I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning to do my (work) on the plantation, and go to school when school started at eight, and when school closed at two, I (would) come back to my job, working till five or six o'clock (telephone rings) in the afternoon.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Gee, so you had a very long day.

TA: Oh yes, but it was something that (I) had to do. The lifestyle of a young (telephone rings) child (in) those days was really (very) different. I have children of my own, (telephone rings) so I can see the (difference).

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: We were just saying that that was a long day for you.

TA: Well, as I said, average working day of a person those days, was no forty hours a week. There was no such thing as overtime. And once you accept your job and your responsibility, it's your responsibility to (do it well) whether you (worked) at night, or weekends, or Sunday. And I took that as my job. The manager was kind enough to give me a job before school and after school and considered that as a full day's work. I had to do it. Sometimes (I worked) on Sundays and worked till late in the evening, but the work was done. Like any function in a big company, you become a cog in a wheel. And you (have) to keep in the motion, otherwise the wheel slows down. If all the other departments finish their job and you don't finish yours, the wheel (doesn't) revolve. Well, in brief, that's the responsibility you accept and you (must) produce.

MK: So back in 1923, you were working, you got a *bangō* from Wailuku Sugar Company.

TA: Yes. And I was paid (a full adult's pay.) I think I began with about dollar and seventy-five cents [\$1.75] a day. Average pay among the full-fledged employees (was about) dollar and a half [\$1.50] to two dollars a day, for ten hours of work. I had a (bad) time (since I was) young, (and) not fully matured, but I had to keep up with the opportunity that was given to me.

MK: You know, when you were a young boy back then and you observed society in Maui at that time, how would you describe what the community and society was like on your island back then?

TA: Well, Maui is an agricultural community. People worked hard from early in the morning to late in the evening, and they had very little time for any kind of a social (life). For society as we see to it today, for fun and for pleasure, very little of that was (happening). So, my participation on that was very nil. In fact, being young, I hardly (had) anything to do other

than (swimming or fishing whenever I had the time.)

MK: And back in those days, who held power in the community, in terms of political power, social power?

TA: Well, the county (government—chairman and the board of supervisors were) the political power, (although) the government power was very limited. To give you an idea of what it was like, even when I first became a member of the [Maui County] board of supervisors [in 1934]—in those days, we called ourselves supervisors, which is comparable to what they call themselves as councilmen [today]. Being the chairman of the finance committee back in 1934, '36, we ran a budget (of about) \$25 million. Today it's another \$175 million. That's about the difference in size of the activities of the government. (Socially) most of the companies took care of their own problems. In those days, unless the project (was) too big, unless it (was) too expensive for the individual company or the community to undertake, the government stepped in. But it was (often) left up to each individual industry to take care of their own problems. So, (most of the) social functions that we had was initiated by the company that you worked for. (The) bigger (the) company (the) more elaborate. They had better programs and plans for recreation if they had it (at all). And (most of the) recreation (activities were confined to Thanksgiving,) Christmas (or) New Year's (day). Only two or three times a year. It (was) not a regular thing like you have now.

MK: I think we'll end here?

WK: We have to change tape.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number two with Toshio Ansai.

WN: Tape number two with Senator Toshio Ansai. Senator Ansai, could you tell us something about the camp that you lived in as a young boy?

TA: We lived in a camp which was called the Stable Camp. It was not an individual (house) as we (have it) today. I remember (in) my young childhood days, we all lived in a barrack. (It was a wooden building) about 230 feet wide and about 80 feet long. And that barrack was divided into sections, a wall between each section. One family occupied that section. It was just one open (room), open with no partition for bedroom, or kitchen, or anything of that kind. The cooking was done outside, outside of your barrack, or perhaps a corrugated shed so that you can keep yourself away from the rain. There was no such thing as an oil stove. No electricity, everything was firewood. And the light that we used in our homes were all (kerosene) oil lamps. It was quite a job to have about half a dozen oil lamps to be cleaned every day and then refilled with oil.

That big, open room was our living room, our study room, (and) our bedroom. When the food is cooked outside and brought into the room, we ate together (in that "big" room). And (since) space (was limited) with a large family (like ours), we had to eat in shifts because (there were nine of us.) Of course, my (older) sister was still in Japan. She was left there (with her grandparents) when my father and mother came here. So it was eight, plus the two [parents], there were ten of us. And after we (got) through with the kitchen, and with the

meals, the place was cleared up for us to study. Each one of us had a small table (which) we (sat) on the floor and did our studies. (And) each one of us was provided (with) an oil lamp. After the study hours are over—and my father was a disciplinarian—he saw to it that every one of us did our studying, and (when finished) we folded everything and brought out (the) *futon*. We called that a modernized mat, (cotton-filled) mattress. You spread the *futon* and we slept (on them). (When) we get up in the morning, we cleaned the place and rolled the *futon* and put (them) aside, (then) the house became a place for other use, where my mother did her sewing or things of that kind.

That didn't last too long. Then, I think, I remember moving into an individual home (still located) in the camp. (It) was not the kind of home that we have today (where) you have (a small) yard (and) space between each home to have some privacy. It was all (very close) together (so that when) you sneezed in one house, the other neighbors in the other house can hear (you). It was that kind of (living). But we all lived that (way and) accepted that. It was much better than the barracks.

WN: Was it mostly Japanese in the camp?

TA: Yes. As I remember, I think in (our) camp we had about fifty people living (there). Most of them were Japanese. We had two Portuguese families and one Filipino family. And later, each individual family, on their own initiative, built a little kitchen outside, where their food (could) be prepared and where they (can) have their meals, and used their main room as their social room, or study room, and their bedroom. Life was simple, life was wholesome, lots of fun. We enjoyed every bit of it.

WN: When you said "fun," as a young boy, what kinds of things did you folks do to have fun?

TA: Our games were everything that you had to build yourself and make it up yourself. I remember as a child I played marbles. We called it playing marbles, (with) those little glass agates, that we used to use. I don't see any of them being used around now. We used to play baseball (also), but there was no such thing as a ball. We (made) our own baseball by making a ball out of the twine (with) the strings that we gathered from the stores. (But) we had fun. And (we didn't have) a bat. We had to carve (one) out from the branch of a tree. Then, of course, as we grew older, when I started going to school, (we had) whatever the school provided. We (played with a real) bat (and ball). If you're wealthy enough (and) can afford it, you can buy (a) bat, but many of us were not in (a) position to do that.

WN: Any mischievous activities that you got into?

TA: Oh yes. A youngster will be a youngster no matter how far back you go. But my parents—my father (especially) was such a disciplinarian that I tried to stay away from (trouble) as much as I (could). But we didn't (get into any big) trouble. We didn't have any place to go swimming, for instance, (so we went) down to the river. And (whenever we found) a place big enough that (could be dammed), we filled those places (and made a pond). Some of them were naturally covered up by the flow of water (and a) pool was there. We improved on it by damming it up a little (more). That was our swimming pool. That's the (sort) of thing we did (to amuse ourselves).

Oh, many times we used to (steal from) the farmers of things that they had planted, such

things (like) sweet potatoes, (corn), things like that. We took (the vegetables) to the swimming pool and while swimming, we made a bonfire and roasted the (corn and) potatoes. But we got the potatoes from the farmers' field without their permission, if you call that mischievous. In our days, if our parents found out about it we would be punished for it (and we were!). The type of (naughty) things that we did was more (like that). It was not done viciously, but just to provide some activities. And taking other people's property is bad, it's wrong. It's wrong now, it's wrong then. But it was not a—we didn't think it was a major offense (then). So when you ask me a question if we had (done mischievous activities), we did. (I guess something) like (some) youngsters of today (who are poor) would do. Times have changed. I grew up with the times (and) I saw the change. And I don't know how we could have curbed it in any way. Whether it would be the parents' responsibility, the church's responsibility, the school's responsibility, or the government's responsibility. But the church, and the school, and the parents (must work together). The parents of the old days were parents in every sense of the word. Not (only) to provide (for) the (physical) needs of the youngsters, but to see that they grew up disciplined. Especially (with emphasis) on being honest. Character building (was stressed) to a point (so others will recognize you) as being (an) honest and hardworking (man). Those things were foremost in (my) mind. Everything you do (was) done (to win the respect of others).

MK: You know, back in those days, who were some of your playmates that later also became involved in politics on Maui?

TA: Well, I don't know if any of my playmates took an interest in politics to the extent of becoming a candidate. That came about in the later part of my years when I started working and doing things more on a community-wide basis. I was the president of the Boy Scout movement here for a few years, and naturally, (as) you get in touch with the youngsters, you get in touch with the parents of the youngsters. In that way, we (were able) to exchange ideas, we get to exchange topics, and get to know each other more, what they are doing, and how happy (or unhappy) they were in doing those things. Those (discussions) are some of the background, I think, that came to me (very) strongly which prompted me to get into politics. Because by then, that's just before I was married [in 1929], I was still in my late teens, I found that the community had grown to a point where it was almost impossible for the company that you're working for to provide you with (everything, especially) after-working (hours) needs. We have to depend on the government, we have to depend on (others in) the community, instead of just the factory that you work for, the company that you work for. So, it's a gradual changeover (in attitudes). The transition period was not easy, because we didn't have funds or means of our own to buy any kind of equipment, or (material), or provisions other than (what little we had at) home. A great deal of (the material needs) had to be depended on the government. We used to play at the ball grounds, which we called the Wailuku ball grounds. And that was a (park) that was not kept as nice as it is now, with a full-time caretaker. We had to do it ourselves. And the place was full of chuckholes, and pebbles, and rocks, that (when) you play a rough game like football, and get hit on the ground, invariably you will get yourself all bruised and (hurt).

But (those are the conditions) we (wanted) to have improved. And I thought that the government is responsible for these things, they were (remiss) in their job and not keeping them up. When I became a member of the [Maui County] board of supervisors, I realized that taking care of a playground was not as important as other things, like the school ground and schools; in those early days, most of these functions were the responsibility of the counties.

The schools (were under) dual responsibility. The program and the staffing was that of the territory—we were a territory then, a state now. The care of the grounds, the building of the buildings, the selection of a site was all county responsibility—they had to pay for it—the taxpayers of Maui County had to pay for it. And you can just imagine, we didn't have (the) flourishing businesses that we have now, with hotels and other industrial and commercial areas. Most of them had to be paid for (in taxes) by the company that you worked for or the individual that you worked for, the individual who worked for the company. And getting paid only about two dollars a day, (one) didn't have too much money to pay. The government had many other responsibilities. The hospital, for instance, one of the necessary things is a hospital. Good health and sanitation care, which includes hospitals, education, all those things are primary functions of the government which (are) important. I found that those things were much more important than the playground. But what prompted me to (get involved initially in politics) was because of the lack of (safe) playgrounds. (However), when I (was elected) into office, I found that (many, many) more important things were not up to where it should (have) been, (basically) because of (the) lack of [county] funds.

WN: I was wondering, what was the difference in those days, what was the relationship between the plantation and the government in those days? Which entity held more power in the old days?

TA: I think the plantation did. Because the plantation were the ones who supplied the government with funds, in the form of taxes, or fees, or what have you. And the government cannot operate without funds, so they were dependent on the plantations. But the government played a very important part too, because everything should be dealt equally. And if you left it up to the individual, regardless of what industry it may be, the stronger ones are going to be the ones to govern, to have more power. And that will be unfair to the smaller industries, the smaller business people. So, we have to have rules and regulations, and laws. And although the county doesn't have any power to enact laws, they have the power to enact ordinances which have the effect of law, to bring about more equality to all the people, all the industries, big or small. So, in answer to your question, I think the [sugar] industry, not necessarily the (sugar) plantation, the construction industry, the farming industry, and all other small industries played a very important part. They created the jobs, the government did not create the jobs.

One thing as I see now as an old man, the difference between the primary function of the government and the primary function of industry or business. Business (has) a much harder (role). They have to always think in terms of paying their—have a payroll to pay their employees. They have to have enough money to pay for the taxes. They have to try to make a few dollars so that they can go into an expansion program. These are the basic responsibilities of any industry, big or small. Government (doesn't worry) about their (source of) revenues. They (are concerned primarily with) how to spend, where to spend. And this is (wrong) because (what is important is) where the source of income (is) coming from, which is the responsibility of private industry, big or small. You can have a saimin shop in a street corner. He's going to worry about his help if he has any. He's going to be worrying about paying his rent. He's got to be paying his taxes. All the primary responsibility is the responsibility of the operator. Government, where the money comes from is not so important as how they spend it. So emphasis was placed on the spending part of it. If you look at it in terms of a successful business, the more important of the two—the spending and the revenue end of it—the revenue is more important, because you cannot spend if you don't have any revenue. In government

it's just the other way. You spend. And then if not enough, you tax the people more. So they had a different role to play. The responsibilities were different as I see it.

WN: And when you were a kid growing up, you know, you said you were getting into mischief and so forth, were you more wary of the plantation getting down on you folks or the government?

TA: I don't think I went into those situations as deeply as that, as to where the responsibility lies. I think my main (concern was) we're not getting it, somebody should give it to us, either the industry or the government. Somebody should give it. We (were) denied these things. Take the condition of the playground. The property's the government's, but in those days, the industry played such an important part. When I use the term "industry," I don't mean only the sugar industry, but many small companies. If you want to have any kind of a community function, the government didn't have to provide you a truck or bus to haul the youngsters from place to place. The company had to do it, the industry had to do it. So, they played a much more important part in our (lives). And naturally, you get to respect that, you get to appreciate that, that was a source that was giving you the help. Basic things like having a good health program, and educational program, and transportation program, supply with water that you need, (are) all the responsibility of the government. And those old days were no more different than now. It's always inadequate.

(Laughter)

MK: Okay, let's end the tape here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is a continuation of Toshio Ansai interview. This is videotape number three.

MK: Okay. Tape number three with Senator Ansai. Okay, maybe we can start this tape by finding out, how and why did you get involved in politics?

TA: Well, in those days, a young man of twenty, twenty-five years old, saw very little (or cared very little) of the functions of the government. The county officials were more in their fifties and sixties, like most other places. And Maui was no different. So when I first thought of becoming a candidate, I was only twenty-five years old. I approached the official of the Republican party which was in power at that time that I'd like to become a candidate. They said that, "You're much too young. You know, we have these older people, and I don't think you have had enough experience in life to be able to come here and carry the responsibility to meet the needs of all the people." They told me, "Why don't you go out and help some older candidates and help them get elected? We have our slate all made." And as I looked down the list, I saw, I think the youngest of them were fifty years old or were in their sixties. So at first, I thought I was out of place. (However), on the insistence of friends that I had who wanted to have some young blood in there, I volunteered (to become a candidate). It was not easy to get among older people who had a mind of their own and (were used to) their ways

(of) operating. (However), I rapidly adjusted myself (and won their respect).

It was not easy. When I say "it was not easy," it was not easy to get elected. I had talked this over with my wife [Ruth Harimoto Ansai] and she thought it was okay, a good idea. It's time for young people to get into government, instead of having older people run our affairs. (Candidates) talk much about house-to-house campaigning today. Fifty years ago, my wife and I went house to house, actually. We had an old jalopy at that time, so we (went from plantation camp to camp). I dropped my wife off on one side of the street (and drove) all the way down to end of the camp. I parked my car there, and I walked down the other street (stopping at each house on the way). My wife is going up one way, I'm coming down the other way. When my wife reached the car, she picked up the car and picked me up when I'm just about ready to finish up my last house on the other side. This is in a developed area where you have homes on both sides (of the road or street).

(In the) Upcountry area where the farmers were living—(there were many) farmers in those days—their homes were about half a mile apart. That was difficult. We had to go from house to house, you know. And many of those (farms) were operated by older people—Japanese-speaking people. I was lost when it comes to (the) Japanese language, (but) my wife was (able to speak the language). She can read and write Japanese. So she did all the interpreting for me. She did the selling for me, and I (spoke in English when families had) youngsters of my age. In this way, we went from house to house. And I think we covered almost 80 percent of the people on Maui.

I started my campaign in May [1934]. The primary election was held in October, and the general election was held in November. I had six, (to) seven months of (campaigning) to do. We didn't have any child at that time, so we spent all of our afternoons, all of our weekends, every (spare time) we had. She was a schoolteacher, and naturally, on summer vacation days, she'd devote her whole time in going from place to place, meeting young people, meeting young women. And fortunately enough, I think (our hard work) paid (off), because I was elected the first year.

MK: That was for the [Maui] County board of supervisors. And was that the usual way to campaign?

TA: No, no. In the old days, they never had any house-to-house campaigning. I think I consider we started it, the group that was back of me, supporting me, and mapping out my campaign and our participation in it. In the old days, it was more run on a partisan basis. Once you got to the party convention and the delegates are introduced, the party would carry (on). The active ones in the party will do (most of) the campaigning for you. They divide the area into blocks or into smaller groups, and then they're the ones that pick somebody out from among the group to try to sell the candidate.

Well, in my case, I was not selected by the [Republican] party. In fact, the party discouraged me from participating, for being so young. So we had to do it all ourselves. By "ourselves," I don't mean my wife and I alone. I had a (large) group of people who believed that young people should participate in politics. And I did. We worked hard. But the results were very successful.

(As a candidate) in politics, I found that in those days, there was not much distinction

(between political parties). Government (was not run) on a partisan basis. Today, it's either you're a Democrat or Republican. If the Democrats are in power (or have the majority), everything's got to be run by them. You can have the minority party voice their opinion, voice their objection, whatever it may be, sometimes it's taken (seriously), sometimes it's not. In those days, regardless of whether you're a Republican or Democrat, if your idea is good, if your program is good, everyone, regardless of party affiliation, backed you up and they (supported) the program. We worked very harmoniously together. There was no distinction (between) Democrat or Republican, but today, whether it's on local basis or even in Congress, almost everything is done on a partisan basis.

WN: Who were some of the older Republicans that you were talking about? Who were some of the Republican leaders at that time?

TA: On the county level or state level?

WN: Yeah, on the---well, the people that told you that you were too young? I guess, county level.

TA: Well, most of the leaders here were plantation managers. They were not candidates themselves, but they were the policymakers and the party leaders. And big business, not necessarily plantation, but big business. Big business supported—was the base of the government here. Anywhere, for that matter. They provide the funds, they (paid) the taxes, and whatever that the government needed. And if that party was in power at that time, that's the party that was closely affiliated with the government.

MK: I was wondering, at that time, you were an employee of (Wailuku Sugar Company's) Waihe'e Dairy and Farm.

TA: Mm hmm [yes].

MK: How did your employer react to your getting involved in politics?

TA: Well, I don't know whether they were too happy about it or not (at the time). But they found out later on that—in fact, they encouraged me to stay in politics and do whatever I can. But a change is hard to accept in anything. Whether it's in a business, in home life, or in government. And the normal way of running a government at that time was big business who played a very important part. Big business meaning older people, elderly people. That's true as you read back in history. Generally, the older people were supposed to have more wisdom, because (of) the years of age and because of the years of work experience, that (were) in a better position to be able to guide the destiny of the company or the destiny of the community or destiny of the government. (These) kind of principles were accepted. Today, that has been changed. (The powers that be) found out there was a place for young people to play a part in government (and consequently) so they encouraged me to run.

I was manager of the Waihe'e [Dairy and] Farm at that time [1934-54]. It was a food production (project) primarily for the employees [of Wailuku Sugar Company]. And that food production (project) was thought of as a (project) to provide good wholesome food, and cheap food, to the employees, instead of leaving it up to (them) to make ends meet (when they were) not strong enough to take the hard chores of the day. (It was important) to have a good percent of your work force report to work, because all the homes were provided by the

company, all of the facilities were provided by the company, be it firewood, (lights), water, the hospital, and the doctor. All the basic (needs) were provided by the company. So if you had to have, say, 100 people work a day, and only 50 percent of them were turning out, you've (still) got 100 people on your work force. In other words, you're providing homes and all the other facilities (for) 200 people when only 100 of them turn out (to work). And that was (a) tremendous cost to run in any kind of industry. (The company) found out that the poor turnout of the employees was (mainly) because they were not properly fed. There was no such thing as (proper) diet or (good) nutrition in those days. (The employees) ate what they can (afford, and that wasn't much).

So the company had the land to provide the employees with wholesome, nutritional basic food. And in the area of protein, meat played a very important part. We did not think too much of fish as being a protein food in those days, but fish was easily obtained. There were a lot of fishermen, and many of the employees did their own fishing on weekends, diving and fishing. Fish was plentiful in those days. The people in Waihe'e, where I managed, 80 percent of them were [Native] Hawaiians (at the time). And that's where I learned the Hawaiian language, (when) working with them and in dispatching them out in the morning. (It was important) to use their language in order to get them to understand what you want. They made me manager of (Waihe'e Dairy and Farm) and we raised about 2,000 head of beef cattle. We (also) had about 1500 heads of dairy cattle. We provided (the laborers with) wholesome milk. And, (as) you know, among the Japanese families, (many) never heard of milk when they were in Japan. But their youngsters who were growing learned the value of milk in school (and wanted) their parents to use milk. And this became a very important part in (their) diet. (We were able to provide) them with cheap milk and meat.

Since we had such a large number of [Native] Hawaiians working on our plantation, we had a poi factory (also). We had a large acreage of taro cultivation (for this). Instead of buying the taro from individuals, we went ahead and started developing our own taro patches, ran our own poi shop to provide poi for the Hawaiians whose basic food was poi. Among the Japanese and Orientals, rice was the basic starch that they used, (but they learned to eat poi also which was very nutritious and inexpensive in those days).

And the wonderful thing is (the fact) that if you provide the good, nourishing food, and build up their bodies, they will be able to stand the strain of the hard work, and their turnout (to work) will become better. So if you need 100 people at work, you don't need to have any more than 125, say 25 percent will be the ones who (are) sick, may be off, instead of keeping 200 people. So that portion of expenses dropped. And more than the expense, is the fact that you were able to build up the health and the (general) condition of the people, not only (for the) laborers, but the (growing) youngsters. This change came over and we were very happy that it did. We (then raised) about 3,000 head of hogs. We had one slaughterhouse, (and) two butcher shops where the people can come (to) do their shopping. We didn't have any such thing as supermarket. If a housewife wanted to go down and get food for the day, they go downtown and go to the vegetable stand to buy vegetable; two blocks away, maybe the meat market. Another two blocks over, maybe the fish market. And then you go another two blocks you have the dry goods and things like that. The housewife had to devote quite a bit of her time in order to do the (day's) shopping. Today (when) you go to the supermarket, you (can get) from soup to nuts in one place. How convenient it is. But those (difficult days) were the beginning.

MK: So Waihe'e Farm and Dairy was set up to provide food for the workers?

TA: Yes. Primary for the workers.

WN: Workers of Wailuku Sugar [Company]?

TA: Yes. We [Wailuku Sugar Company] had (quite a) large work force at that time. I think we had about 1,000 people working (for the company) at that time. But we did not stop the others [i.e., non-plantation workers] from coming (to take) advantage of it. In the old days, transporting the employees from place to place was a very difficult thing to do. They didn't have (the) convenient means of transportation that we have today. So locating the camps, scattered around, was the way to make it convenient for the employees to work in that particular district, whether it's cultivation of the land, or whether harvesting of the land, or the irrigation of the land. All of these processes that you have to go through to make it easier for them to start before daybreak, was to locate the camps in many (different) places. And all the foodstuff that we produced had to be taken to those camps, instead of the housewives or the family finding a way to get to the farm. That made it easier for the family to take advantage of this opportunity.

MK: And you were saying that your employer, (Wailuku Sugar Company's) Waihe'e Dairy and Farm, later on supported you after you got into politics.

TA: Oh definitely. Since such a large population of Maui were Hawaiians or part-Hawaiians, and 80 percent of my employees were Hawaiians, they had their own way of convincing their relatives and friends, "Let's give that young man a chance." My (ability) to speak Hawaiian, for instance, in the Hawaiian districts, (surprised) the old-time Hawaiians that I (was able to) speak the language better than their own sons and daughters who were Hawaiians. Well, like anywhere else, no more different than in a Japanese family to find outsiders speaking the Japanese language better than your own (children). That kind of made them (come) closer to me.

WN: So did you go campaigning like to Hāna, and Ke'anae, and those . . .

TA: Oh yes.

WN: . . . remote areas . . .

TA: Yeah.

WN: . . . on the jalopy that you . . .

TA: No, no. We, of course, in my case, going to Ke'anae and Hāna, the vehicle road was already built (and I took my jalopy). But from Hāna to, say, Kaupō was on horseback. And (that) takes about a couple of hours on horseback, one way. I felt at ease because I was running a farm and I spent half of my day on horseback. But to many of the candidates who have never been on horseback, well, they (were) frightened getting a horse ride, especially going over the trail and you looked down 2[00], 300 feet (over a) cliff. That's where the trail was, the horse trail alongside the cliff. It was not an easy thing to do.

But we had our share of fun in politics in those days. Every small village and hamlet that we came to, we had to rest before we get started, (to) go to the next station. (Every village usually had good) Hawaiian entertainment—they played their *'ukulele*, (hula dancing), mass singing, and the whole community would come and join us. So we had rallies (everywhere) without too much trouble.

WN: Okay.

MK: Stop here and we'll continue.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number four of the Toshio Ansai interview. This is the last tape.

MK: Okay. Tape four, interview with Senator Toshio Ansai. I guess we can formally begin this tape by having you tell us why it is that you approached the Republican party and not the Democratic party back then in 1934?

TA: Well, I think, we (are) a state now, (and) we have a lot to be thankful for the part the Republican party did for Hawai'i. If (we) go all the way back to when Prince [Jonah] Kūhiō [Kalaniana'ole] was the first [Hawai'i] delegate to Congress, he was a Republican. And he did a lot. He really paved the way to have the nation look upon Hawai'i as (an integral) part of (the United States). He was a Republican and all the following leaders were Republican. Sam [Samuel Wilder] King, a very, very strong Republican, who did so much in the early days. And the early days were rough, because Congress did not look upon Hawai'i as equal to that of any other state. We were governed more by the Organic Act than by a constitution. So everything that applies to the forty-eight states did not automatically apply to us. And we had our restrictions under the Organic Act. But Sam King did an excellent job in trying to bring to the attention of Congress, that we are no more different than they are. We are taxed and we're paying every bit of what obligation that any citizen in any state is paying or meeting. I (believe) he opened the eyes of Congress to a great extent, that Hawai'i, although it's so far away from the other states (and) we're not contiguous to any other state, our thinking, our actions, our acceptance of responsibilities were (not) different than other states. Then (he was) followed by Joe [Joseph R.] Farrington and all the other (Hawai'i political leaders). Of course, I (also) give credit to the other Democratic governors, and the governors who were appointed governors. I served under Governor [Ingram M.] Stainback. He did a marvelous job. And Governor. . . .

WN: Oren E. Long?

TA: Yes. Short time, Oren Long. And, of course, the longest period of time I spent was with Governor [John A.] Burns. I thought Governor Burns was an outstanding person. Well, I am a Catholic and so is he. And every morning before the [legislative] session (began), I (went) to church (to attend) the six o'clock Mass. And every time I (went) there, I (saw) Governor Burns there. And many times after church, he invited me to go to his home to have breakfast with him, rather than go back to the hotel and have my breakfast (there) at the dining room. I accepted his kindness. He and I became very close, and (learned) each other's reason why (we were) in politics. And whenever he (came) to Maui, for instance, invariably, he would come and stop by (to) see me. Even after I left the senate and he was still the governor. I

(believe) he did (much) in bringing about more equality, social equality, for the people here. He championed the workingman, and I think he did a great job in that. Of course, the union organization came in to do the implementation of it, but the principles and the ideas, I give him credit for a lot of that; to impress upon the employers of people, whether you're big or small (business), that the workingman is what makes the company. Like in the old days, no different than any part of the Mainland, the owners of the company, the operators of the company, felt that the working people owed it to them. They're (doing) the jobs. But sometimes they forget the fact that the workingmen, they're making the company. And this kind of (acceptance of) equality was brought (about), I think, to a great extent, to the attention of the industry by Jack Burns.

I was, by then, out of the farm. And I became industrial relations [and personnel] director of [Wailuku] Sugar Company. Contract management, and the employees' welfare—sick benefits, and all the other kinds of benefits that they receive—were my responsibility, or my department's responsibility. So, I was very much interested in some of the things he [Burns] was doing. Of course, that didn't make the industrial leaders too happy. But then, it was a coming thing, and they (realized and) they accepted it. Today it's an accepted practice. Any change is difficult, any change is (difficult) to accept. And this change was no different.

When you asked me why I became a Republican: the Republicans were in power. And it was only natural for me to—well, I felt that the most (good) I can do is to get in stream with the party that was in power. It is easier for me to reach you, for instance, as one in government office, than if I were to be an outsider and have to go through half a dozen secretaries before I can get a chance to reach you. I'm talking about the (top) man. I felt that because I had established myself as a government official, good, bad, or indifferent issues that I wanted to talk with a (top) man, I didn't have to make an appointment with half a dozen secretaries in order to meet (him), which normally is the channel by which you meet any (top man). If you want to meet the president of the university, today, they might say they have open doors, but not in those days. And the university was (not any) different (from) other private business. You heard about it, you've seen that, so you know what I mean, but I thought this was the best way for me to get ahead, to bring my problems to (the top man). Which I did. (The Republican party) accepted me. They were in power at that time, because they were the economic leaders, they were the industrial leaders, and they were the leaders in government, (I wanted to be a part of them and be able to serve the people better and effectively.)

WN: Was there any ideological reason for joining the Republican party?

TA: Well, I felt that everything concerned—I come from an Oriental extraction. And in those days, the Orientals, these Chinese, or Japanese, or Koreans, were not accepted fully and equally like any of the White man. And naturally those things (have) changed, but the change was gradual. And I (wanted) to hasten that change. Our participation in government, our participation in war—World War II—I think hastened this kind of understanding and acceptance. This is my feeling (and I believe it).

MK: Did you embrace the principles of the Republican party?

TA: Well, I'm just a cog in the wheel of the Republican party. I didn't play any prominent part. On a local basis, I became president of the precinct and worked more with the people than the policymakers. (I believe in the principles of the Republican party.)

MK: And whose campaigns were you involved in, in those early days? I think once you mentioned that you helped support Sam [Samuel Wilder] King.

TA: Yes. Yes. When Sam King ran for delegate [to Congress], I was the co-chairman of his campaign on Maui, as young as I was. (I also campaigned for him to be governor of Hawai'i later.) I got to know him very well. And we became good friends. Not only political friends, but social friends. Later in years, I helped Bill [William F.] Quinn, (for governor of Hawai'i,) and the last time when [D. G.] "Andy" Anderson sought the office of governor. I was on crutches at that time, so I couldn't do much, but I did whatever I could. (I also campaigned for Daniel K. Inouye for the U.S. Senate, although he was a Democrat, because he was a personal close friend through the World War II years. I knew him and respected him as a younger brother. I knew he would serve us well.)

MK: I know, in the old days, Harold Rice was a Republican and . . .

TA: Yes. Harold [W.] Rice's political career began as a Republican. He was one of the industrial leaders, he was one of the government leaders. He was our senator from Maui as a Republican. And then later on he (decided) to become a Democrat. [The Maui County chairman] was Eddie Tam. And Eddie Tam was [at first] a Republican, because Harold Rice, his boss was a Republican, his company was Republican. But (later) they (changed) to be Democrats. But (in) my estimation, the fact that they changed parties did not change them as the individuals I knew. They were (good, sincere) people. When I became a member of the [Maui County] board of supervisors, Harold Rice was the chairman [of the board]. He was a Democrat chairman (then), not a Republican. By then he (had) changed his party. I found him to be very understanding and a fine person. He did not put partisan activity before that of the government responsibility he carried as the executive officer. He was the chairman of the [Maui County] board of supervisors. The same as (we) have now, the mayor being the executive officer, and the councilmen (serve on) the board. He conducted himself as a fine, levelheaded gentleman. He did not put partisan activities before that of the good of the county (and I admired him for that).

MK: And you mentioned that like yourself, you were a Republican, Eddie Tam was originally a Republican. Were there others who were not *Haoles*, who were Republicans back then on Maui? Back in the 1930s?

TA: Well, practically everybody here was Republican. The chief of police, Sheriff Crowell, was a Republican. And our treasurer, Pierre Cockett, was a Republican. And our county auditor was Gene Bell, a Republican. And they are all of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian extraction. So, it's not only *Haoles*. Many of us Japanese were Republicans, although we did not hold any significant jobs in industry or in government. You know, in the old days, I think the history shows that it's about the same everywhere, where the industrial leaders and the business leaders who use their own funds to start the business with, somehow found more trust and confidence in someone of their own (race), and their own (race) were the Whites. You never heard, in our days, that the bank manager was a Japanese, or school principal was a Japanese. Or government official was a Japanese. So, we had to work our way up to (convince) them that we are just as (capable and) loyal, we can be just as trusting as any one of them, if we're only given a chance to prove it. Our daily life was such that we (proved) it. Anything that we're asked to do we always accept the responsibility (by) seeing it (through) to the end. But as time went along, I think (we realized) that those of other extraction (are) just as capable,

just as sincere, just as trusting as one of (our) own (race). But it (is) not easy to prove that point. It (is) slow progress, slow changeover, but (in looking) at the leaders in our community (today), not only in government but in business, I (believe) one is (judged) upon what you know, what you can produce. (How you produce, your integrity) are the primary reasons why you've been placed in that position. Is that true?

WN: (Chuckles) Right. I was wondering, when you were first campaigning in that first campaign with your wife [1934], what kinds of things did you talk about to the people when you went door to door? What were the issues in those days that you focused on?

TA: Well, you go to the country area, the needs of the people those days were (not) different (from that) of today. They were interested in what is (happening) around their life, their living, school for their growing (children), and their program, and our health and sanitation (programs), Care of the elderly, and the sick, and the needy. Things like that. And (since) most of them were part-time farmers, how to get to the place of work. The safety that we have, good police department, a good fire department. Many of the services, like the fire department, the police department was centralizing where the people are, the largest population, populated groups and places. The outlying communities were (mostly) left up to their own, but (their needs were the same) as anywhere. So you tried to talk about the things that they really need. You try to place yourself in their position. What are you interested in? We don't have any set rule as to what you talk about. You (check) the situation, you talk to them accordingly. (You want to help. To serve them is the foremost emphasis.)

But speaking about making sacrifices for the good of the overall cause, I'd like to give you (an example) where we, the neighbor island senators, in those days, the territorial days, comprised two-thirds of the senate body. Honolulu was the city, the capital. We realized that we should have a capital that we can be proud of, the whole nation can be proud of. (So) we made many sacrifices—the neighbor islands did. Although (we neighbor island senators) controlled the majority of the senate, we made sacrifices to have Honolulu grow and become the kind of city that we'd like to have it become, the capital (we can be proud of). Excuse me.

WN: Oh, yeah, I think that's time to break.

MK: Okay.

[Toshio Ansai passed away prior to the second scheduled interview.]

END OF INTERVIEW

**HAWAI'I
POLITICAL HISTORY
DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

June 1996